

Subject: [Irwn_members] 15 Feb 2005,
Acceptable racism -
Anti-Gypsyism in Italy

Date: Tue, 15 Feb 2005 07:08:51 +0200

From: Janette Grönfors <janettegronfors@hotmail.com>

To: irwn_members@advocacylists.org

Dear members,

Good morning. I want to draw your attention for this information what Mr Valeriu Nicolae has sent to us.

Warm wishes from the frosty Finland (it's ten degrees below zero)

janette, IRWN

EUROPEAN ROMA INFORMATION OFFICE

On Saturday, 29th of January 2005, 10 young Italians set ablaze a camp where 5 Romanian Roma families including a 9 months old baby lived in. The event happened in via Aveta de la Ercolano 10 km away from Napoli. The perpetrators justified their action as "Saturday night fun".

This incident and many similar ones are usually downplayed or ignored by Italian media and there is yet to be heard any official reaction of major Italian politicians about racist attacks against Roma.

On 4th of February 2005, two Roma women were accused in Lecco for trying to steal a child. Both of them said they were begging with no intention whatsoever of kidnapping.

In order to avoid being sentenced both of them accepted the suggestion of their lawyer and pleaded guilty and accordingly they were sentenced to 8 months and 10 days in jail. As expected the sentence was suspended. Their lawyer also acknowledged that the women told him they never tried to kidnap the child.

Corriere della Sera ran an article quoting the young mother defending herself against the "kidnapers" and La Padania started a strong campaign against the "zingari" who are stealing the young Italians (Padanians).

"Giu le mani dai nostri bambini" (Take your hands off our children) posters with a picture of a Roma have been spread all around Lombardia. Demonstrations against the "shameful" decision took place in Lecco.

Pietro Zocconali the president of the National Association of Sociologists implied in a public statement following the incident that killing children is a practice. He claimed that Roma steal children and then sell them "sometimes in parts".

Roberto Maroni minister of employment of the region has asked the judge who suspended the sentence to

consider changing her job and had strong words against the Roma.

The mayor of Lecco as well as other leading politicians including Senator Giuseppe Valditara were also fast to join in as Anti-Gypsyism continues to be an electoral bonanza for some of Italian politicians.

On 10th of February at dawn around 5 am the Palermo police did a round up in a Roma "camp", justified as a "children census", leading to the arrest of several persons and the notification of a number of repatriation orders. Most of those living in the camp are refugees from Kosovo and Human Rights Activist in Palermo fear an illegal collective deportation that could fit the ongoing electoral campaign, which uses racist messages as selling points.

Anti-Gypsyism is an aggressive, widespread and still acceptable form of racism in Europe. Without strong reactions from European Institutions and leading European Politicians condemning it the social cohesion and equal opportunities both fundamental principles of United Europe are running the risk to be viewed as hypocrisy by the over 8 million European Roma.

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